

**STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
Radisson, Bismarck & Virtual  
February 3 - 4, 2022**

**Call to Order:** Russ called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

**Roll Call:**

**Members Present:** Jan Beddes, Angie Bosch, Shannon Cook, Russ Cusack, LaRae Gustafson, Nancy London, Gillian Plenty Chief, Bill Willis, Jared Ferguson, Leon Dietrich, Deb Unruh

**Members Absent:** Brenda Boehler, Benjamin Johnson, Drew Hanson

**Non-Council Members Present:** Damian Schlenger, Beth Larson-Steckler, Scott Burlingame, Royce Schultze

**Approval of November 2021 Minutes:** Jared Ferguson made a motion to approve the November 2021 SILC minutes as presented, Nancy London seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

**Approval of the February 2022 Agenda:** Deb Unruh made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, Gillian Plenty Chief seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

**Correspondence – Russ Cusack:**

No correspondence has been received.

**Treasurer's Report – Bill Willis:** Reviewed the Treasurer's Report. The report is only through January 2022 and the budget has been entered into the state fiscal system. \$70,203.00 reported within budget balance with \$9046.00 expenses all paid.

**Jared Ferguson made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented, Nancy London seconded the motion to approve. Motion passed by unanimous decision.**

**Vote on Treasurer:** Shannon Cook nominated herself. Jared Ferguson motioned to close nominations and vote in Shannon Cook for the position as Treasurer, Nancy London seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

**Transition Services, Pathfinder Services of ND – Beth Larson-Steckler**

As a support specialist she focuses on ages 14-26. There are four different areas of assistance: resource and information, training and develop, technology assistance, and outreach and leadership. She works with youth individually or youth and their guardians, but the greater majority are parents. They offer "Train the Trainer" workshops and presentations on how to advocate and navigate the educational system for a successful and appropriate education within the least

restrictive educational environment. Always educating on the rights of students for a free and appropriate education.

### **North Dakota Assistive – Reva Kautz and Mike Chaussee**

Mike demonstrated some of common assistive technology. They are the state's assistive technology program. Several areas of Assistive Technology (A.T.) Act - public awareness, training for professionals, demonstrations of assistive technology devices (demonstration centers in Fargo and Bismarck, but they serve the whole state-also virtual demonstration center is in the works for remote areas of the state), short term trials (6 weeks) of equipment, and a funding mechanism. Some of the funding mechanisms are the Possibilities Grant (funds are raised/not through A.T. Act) and a financial loan program for larger priced items (vans, ramps, etc.) much like a financial institution. There are also state funds for specialized phone programs that allows for free phones depending on a person's income. They have Senior Safety program (via a state contract) for North Dakotans 60 year of age or older living in their own residence in which they can receive assistive technology to help stay independent in their home. This program is not income based. Low vision and low hearing dual diagnosis individuals can participate in the Older Individuals who are Blind program. Shannon Cook asked if there is someone that installs some of the assistive technology in the homes in the remote part of the state. Mike stated they do have some ability to do initial installation around their demonstration centers, but installation outside of that is limited. Deb Unruh mentioned Choice Ready through Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has graduating students do 25 hours of public service work which may help solve this technology installation issue in many regions. In the demonstration centers it is better to do an appointment, but it is not required. Russ asked Mike if he would be able to assist in recruiting individuals with disabilities for the SILC board.

### **Money Follows the Person (MFP) – Jake Reuter**

MFP services they offer as a Medicaid based service – Transition Coordinator Service, 24-Hour Nursing Call Services, Onetime Moving Costs, and Transition Adjustment Support Services. MFP received \$5M in July 2021 for capacity building projects – Assistive Technology (ND Assistive), Direct Service Workforce Resource Center (QSP services) through September 2025, 1915i Provider and Developmental Disabilities Incentive grants, Rental Assistance program, another for people returning to the community from the State Hospital among many other projects. They will be adding two staff in Bismarck, three in Fargo, and three in Minot.

### **Committee Breakout**

**Friday, February 4, 2022**

Call to Order: Gillian Plenty Chief called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

### **Roll Call:**

Members Present: Shannon Cook, Bill Willis, Leon Dietrich, Jared Ferguson, Nancy Lundon, Deb Unruh, LaRae Gustafson, Angie Bosch, Russ Cusack, Gillian Plenty Chief

Members Absent: Jan Beddes, Brenda Boehler, Drew Hanson, Benjamin Johnson

Non-Committee Members: Royce Schultze, Scott Burlingame, Veronica Zietz and Rachel Thomason from Protection and Advocacy, Beth Larson-Steckler, Andrea Schlobohm

### **Protection and Advocacy (P&A) – Veronica Zeitz and Rachel Thomason (Legal Director)**

Abuse, Neglect training are open to everyone on a monthly basis on their website. One project they are working on is Supported Decision Making (will be at least 8 trainings throughout the state) for alternatives to guardianship. Overall, 3,200 guardianships exist in North Dakota. Just under 1,000 are with professional guardians. Overall, 277 guardianships were terminated in 2021 which is a very large increase. Another project is Individual Justice Training. They started a podcast project (MHAM) which started with the State Hospital. They are planning to do six more episodes across the year with a mental health focus. All P&As have funds to do vaccine hesitancy work. Some ads have been released already. Voting work will be coming up. They are looking to work with a vendor to assess voting sites for accessibility, etc. for people with disabilities. ABLE accounts are for eligible individuals that allows them to save money without affecting their services. Now these accounts are established in out of state banks, but this may change in the future. They are tracking accessibility issues at the capitol, which should be finished by this December.

### **Annual SILC Report Follow-up Discussion**

Damian and Scott gave an update on the Annual Report. Aimee Volk created a great template, and we now have content for most sections including mission, vision, IL philosophy, success stories, etc. Data that will be expressed is service by type, gender, type of disability, # of people served, age, and location (by a scatterplot map) if possible.

By the next SILC mtg the mission, IL Philosophy and services and community education and outreach accomplishments should be ready for the SILC Annual Report.

### **Quarterly Director's Report:**

**Scott for Independence, Inc.:** See attached.

**LaRae for Options:** See attached.

**Angie for Freedom:** See attached.

**Royce for Dakota Center for Independent Living:** See attached.

### **Committee Reports:**

**Internal Affairs – Nancy Lundon:** See Grid

IL philosophy sent to the group and discussion held for the Annual Report.

**Nancy made a motion to accept the IL Philosophy as reported as a part of the Annual Report. Leon Dietrich seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.**

SILC Vacancies: One in Quadrant 2 and two in Quadrant 3

State Agency rep, Bill Willis, will be open in March 2022. Bill found his replacement and Ali Brown and she has already submitted her application and her application has been accepted. Jared Ferguson announced he would be leaving VR at the end of February.

External Affairs – Scott Burlingame: Angie Bosch accepted the chairperson position for External Affairs. Updated on the GRID.

Governance Committee – Royce Schultze:

Leon Dietrich's term is up in March which he wants to stay on the SILC.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) – Russ Cusack:

A new chairperson was elected for the SRC (Renee). SRC took VR's recommendation to go off of order of selection. VR also gave an update on the six tenets of their strategic plan. Regional updates were given from Bismarck and Minot VR Regional Administrators on work in those regions. They updated the Client Financial Participation policy that was approved to reach/serve more people with disabilities.

Committee on Aging – Royce Schultze: No Report

Traumatic Brain Injury Council – Shannon Cook:

There have been policy changes with HCBS for 1915i. Shannon was unable to attend.

Olmstead Commission – Scott Burlingame:

They are forming a committee to do some strategic planning for the commission. This is due to the committee launching just prior to the pandemic which affected some of the early traction. A lot of the first few years has been learning via presentations.

**Public Comment:** N/A

The next SILC meeting will be May 5-6, 2022, in Grand Forks, ND and will have the virtual option.

**Gillian Plenty Chief made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Jared Ferguson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.**

SILC Directors Report February 2022  
Scott Burlingame, Executive Director – Independence, Inc.

**Individual Services**

For this report, I asked our direct service staff to each give me an example of a success story they have had since November. Here they are:

Working with a young man, 21-year-old, who has some major barriers (Criminal Record) and is homeless. He was able to get his Birth Certificate, Social Security Card and get a job. We will be assisting him in transitioning into his own apartment pretty soon here.

A 38-year-old man wanted to learn about the Minot City Bus. He learned about the bus routes, the cost for bus fare, and the process for taking the bus. Then he rode two bus routes with an Independence Inc. staff member. When he came to his next appointment at the Independence Inc. Minot office, he took the bus by himself, achieving his goal of learning how to take the city bus.

A 64-year-old came to our Minot office looking for additional accountability and help staying motivated. He has been successful in attending our weekly meetings with a peer mentor and looks forward to coming to the office each week. This has been beneficial to his recovery and it allows him to work through life's barriers while maintaining an optimistic and positive outlook.

A 57-year-old woman came to Independence Inc. after a fire in her apartment building forced her to become homeless. She had numerous different barriers when it came to housing. Multiple rental companies told us they would not rent to her because of this. However, with a lot of patience and persistence we were able to find her a home that she loves.

A group of 3 students in the BEYOND Program at TGU Granville have drastically improved their disability awareness and self-advocacy skills over the past few 4 years of me working with them. They can easily talk about their disability, what accommodations they need, and how to ask for them thanks to the BEYOND Program.

A 62-year-old wanted to move from a nursing facility back into her home. We worked on purchasing all the assistive technology she needed, home set up, worked to get home care services in the home, and now she has successfully transitioned and is living in her home.

A 58-year-old woman who uses a wheelchair needed a ramp installed at her home. She is a double amputee and relied on her husband to bring her up and down the stairs to get out of the house. Together we applied for the Rehab Accessibility Program grant through North Dakota Housing Finance Agency and matched its funds using another a grant through Aging and Disability Resource Link. Upon completion of the ramp, the woman smiled and thanked us so much for getting this done

so fast. She states she is now able to go outside on her own and enjoy the beautiful North Dakota weather.

### **Community Services**

For the last few years, we have been involved with the Shovel for Independence Campaign, encouraging snow removal within 24 hours of a snow event. However, we have had very little snow during that time. This year is different. We have seen the problem that has caused as it has become more difficult for people with mobility limitations to move snow. We have found it harder than in the past to coordinate volunteers to do it.

We did find some people with disabilities who were willing to become QSP's and do only chore removal. Unfortunately, when they found out the complexity of becoming a QSP and getting paid for it, they lost interest. This was despite our staff offering to help them every step along the way. We are still trying to find other alternatives.

On November 16<sup>th</sup> we held our 12<sup>th</sup> annual IL Fair. As we expected, our attendance was down by about half this year, however, it was still a good event. We had Daniel Gulya do use the event to gather information for the State Olmstead Commission.

One of the community groups I am part of is the Minot Chamber-EDC's Government Affairs Committee. At a recent meeting with the City Manager, we had a long conversation that is a perfect example of the intersection of disability rights and good community planning. There is a new hospital being built on the south side of town. Because of this, the city is spending millions on new roads, sidewalks, water and sewer and more. While that may be the only choice for the hospital, it shows a little about how expensive it is for the taxpayers to have developments that outgrow a community.

That same outgrowth also makes the community less livable for people with disabilities. Urban sprawl. makes our communities less accessible. For that reason, I have been asking about the development of an infill plan. An infill plan works to identify and promote open spaces within a city and create new construction where existing infrastructure is already in place.

On that note, I attended the annual meeting of the Minot Downtown Association. At the meeting, a local small business owner made a point of telling me about how they are applying for a grant through the city's façade improvement program to do improvement to the storefront accessibility.

### **New Staff**

Twila Allee was hired on January 2 as an Independent Living Advocate as part of the MFP program. She recently moved her from California and spent nine years working at the Independent Living Center of Southern California for 8 years. She is getting used to the North Dakota winters.

### **Options RCIL ND SILC REPORT**

February 2022

### **Community Education Training:**

Presented a training on “Emergency Preparedness” to the consumers and staff at Mountain Brooke Recovery Center located in Grand Forks with nine participating. The staff at Mountain Brooke like to have this training each year as a refresher.

### **Home Modifications/Technical Assistance:**

**Options hired a new Accessibility Specialist, Brooke Peterson, she comes to Options from an Architectural Firm located in Minot serving the last 7 years as a Computer-Aided Design Draftsperson. She is currently working on her Certification and getting her feet wet surveying projects for USFWS, individuals and local businesses.**

### **Medicare D Assistance:**

Tami Staven and Heidi Gustafson in Options Cavalier and Devils Lake office assisted 56 individuals by assisting them in researching appropriate insurance companies for their Medicare D prescription program. Due to these efforts, individuals saved a total of \$18,590.89 in out-of-pocket costs compared to the costs previously paid.

### **Relocations/Diversions:**

- Since Options new fiscal year began in October 2021, twenty-two individuals relocated to community living settings from nursing facilities and homeless shelters. Fifteen of the relocations were under Aging and Disability Resource Link (ADRL) funding. Seven were under the Money Follows the Person grant funding.
- Five individuals have been prevented from entering a nursing facility.

### **Advocacy Issue:**

Options' Staff has noted that the Mental Health Departments of the Human Service Centers have changed their eligibility for individuals to receive Case-Management services. Individuals who had Case-Management services for years are now being dropped. Individuals going into institutional are dropped and upon returning to community-based settings are denied services. Due to settlement between the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the State of North Dakota, increased emphasis is placed on ensuring people are not inappropriately placed in institutional settings through the enhancement of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). Because of these changes Options have increased capacity to assist people with physical disabilities, but still struggle with services for persons with mental health disabilities due to lack of case management services. Options staff would like to team up with individuals across the state to address the changes to the Mental Health Depts. within the Human Service Centers.

### **Freedom Resource Center**

## ND SILC Director's Report – February 2022

### Fargo

- Two Living Well 102 IL Skills classes began in December. One group is for adults, the other class is made up of students from Fargo Public and West Fargo Public schools. The class is being offered both in person and on Zoom. Merri, IL Advocate is facilitating both classes.
- There have been
  - 7 **MFP** transitions since the last meeting. Working with 2 referrals.
  - 21 **ADRL** transitions since the end of September. Working with 45 referrals.
- Hired two new IL Advocates whose primary job duties will be working with MFP and ADRL grants to assist people to transition to community-based living. All offices in Fargo are full.
- Drew Hanson, Peer Mentor Specialist, worked his last day on January 14, he is relocating back to Minot, ND.
- We are currently interviewing for an IL advocate that will work primarily with the ADRL program.

### Jamestown

- There have been
  - 1 **MFP** transitions since November. Working with 6 referrals.
  - 3 **ADRL** transitions since November. Working with 1 referrals.
- We are advertising to hire one additional full-time position in the Jamestown office for the position of IL Advocate, very few people have applied for the position.

### Lisbon

Working with 2 ADRL referrals, 1 MFP referral

### Wahpeton

Working with 2 MFP Referrals

### Giving Hearts Day

- Our GHD theme this year is **"Ramp-It-Up."** We are featuring our ramp program and pushing to raise **\$40,000**. Some ramp facts: In 2021 we provided 42 homes with 687 feet of ramp and drove over 9,962 miles to place the ramps in our service area. Jerry, Drew, and Wanda got together to take pictures and video clips for using to engage Freedom's Facebook & Instagram following leading up to GHD. These will show how a ramp gets set up, what it looks like when it's not proper vs proper, and a fun surprise at the end in celebrating getting to the top of the ramp! The images and video content will be starting the week leading up to GHD. Prior to that, we will be sharing information about our ramp program to help people learn more about it and how it works. We are also working to gain pre-campaign funding that needs to be submitted by end of day January 24<sup>th</sup>.

### ND Ramps

- 4 ramps have been placed and 13 modification assessments have been completed since the last meeting.



## **Dakota CIL – February 2022 Director's Report**

### **MFP/ADRL**

Hired 2 TC: Cody Kurtz and Samantha Sayler

MFP Transitions-12 ADRL - 4

Two portable ramps. one in Emmons County and one in Burleigh County

### **CARES**

Provided non-perishable food, toilet paper, and paper towels. Amen Food Pantry Dickinson, McClusky Food Pantry and Lincoln Food Pantry

Loaned 3 Ipads one was for a 101 year old lady to communicate with family and participate in church. Another who is recovering from a stroke. He did rehab in Chicago, but both he and his family did not want him in an NF due to COVID

1 ramp

We are purchasing to-go boxes for The Banquet held at Trinity Luthern Church.

Staff assisted and 86-year-old lady moved from an assisted living facility into her own apartment. Her children stated the lockdowns had affected her mentally and physically and that she has missed out on a lot of family activities because of COVID. With CARES, we were able to pay her deposit and 1<sup>st</sup> month's rent, and through ADRL, she was able to obtain a table and a lift chair.

### **Advocacy**

Staff assisted one of our consumers by calling the Dakota Department of Human Services to file a complaint on her eligibility worker. The worker denied this consumer for LIHEAP because of being on subsidized housing and said they pay the heat. This consumer's heat is electric and is not included in her rent. The consumer and staff called MDU, and it was confirmed this consumer does qualify for the LIHEAP program. In addition, the consumer and staff were informed that there is going to be a meeting with Burleigh County Social Services because there were several other complaints about this eligibility worker. Complaints include telling consumers they are not getting their papers in on time and the eligibility worker not reviewing the consumer's forms properly. Staff and other community agencies advocated to the Director of the Department of Human Services to urge him to revise the Emergency Rent Assistance Program application process. Delays in getting the funding have been the biggest frustration shared by service providers. Agency staff has communicated that they worked hard to build relationships with landlords and their communities to provide safe and affordable housing to those who need it most. Due to delays, landlords are refusing to wait for the rent payments and are beginning the eviction process.

### **Technical Assistance**

Staff met with an apartment manager who wanted to add additional blue line parking. She wanted to know if she needed all elements to the additional parking, and after looking at the current parking, she was above the number of accessible spots required. The reason for additional parking was a couple of tenants had accessible parking permits, but most of the time couldn't use the existing spots because they were taken. The apartment manager wanted to accommodate them by adding more spots close to their entrance. She was encouraged to add the other elements when they restripe.

Staff did an apartment assessment for an MFP consumer to see if the bedroom was large enough for a hospital bed, and it was, but not by much. Staff also looked at the bathroom to see if a Hoyer would fit for toileting and showers, but the bathroom design did not give enough room.